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MALI TRANSITION INITIATIVE (MTI)

QUARTERLY REPORT

PROJECT YEAR 1 AND FISCAL YEAR 2014, 2ND QUARTER
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April 2014

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QUARTERLY REPORT

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A&E	Architectural and Engineering
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ATT	Amadou Toumani Touré
COP	Chief of Party (AECOM)
CR	Country Representative (OTI)
DDGS	Direct Distribution of Goods and Services
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
GUC	Grant Under Contract
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LTTA	Long-Term Technical Assistance
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali <i>Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation au Mali</i>
MNLA	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad <i>Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad</i>
MTI	Mali Transition Initiative
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa <i>(Mouvement pour le Tawhîd et du Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest)</i>
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
SOM	Senior Operations Manager
SRS	Strategic Review Session
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistance
TAP	Transition Activities Pool
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the Mali Transition Initiative (MTI) in June of 2013. During the second quarter of Fiscal Year 2014, activity development and implementation accelerated, especially in the Timbuktu region as the National Initiatives team worked to close activities related to the legislative elections, while laying the foundation for a strategic partnership with the Ministry of National Reconciliation.

COUNTRY SITUATION & POLITICAL UPDATES

There continues to be a slow pace of economic recovery from the political crisis, which ground many sectors of the economy to a halt, especially in and around Bamako. This, along with post-conflict reconstruction in the north, has led to an impression among Malians that the democratically-elected government is struggling. Economic, social, and physical recovery from the political and security crisis is not keeping pace with expectations, and communication by key government figures, including the president and the central ministries, do not respond to the demands of the Malian people.

The lack of progress toward a final peace agreement between the government and the northern armed groups, particularly the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), is of great concern. Representatives of the MNLA made a high-profile visit to Russia, which followed a visit to Morocco and one planned to Italy. Support and progress toward national reconciliation appears to have gained greater traction. The National Assembly ratified the decree creating the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. The Ministry of National Reconciliation convened the country's third forum, this one held in Timbuktu, as part of a series the ministry plans to implement across the country to move forward dialogue and citizen engagement in national reconciliation.

BUDGET INFORMATION

Mar-14	Amount Approved	Amount Spent To Date	Balance
Operations (Including TAP Fees)	\$6,650,000.00	\$3,390,188.95	\$3,259,811.05
TAP	\$6,650,000.00	\$1,497,173.82	\$5,152,826.18
Total	\$13,300,000.00	\$4,887,362.77	\$8,412,637.23
Operations	50%	69%	49%
Activities	50%	31%	77%

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS, ACHIEVEMENTS & MAJOR ACTIVITIES

The program's activities and support in the Timbuktu Region accelerated, both in Timbuktu town and Niafunke Cercle. MTI concluded its support toward elections-related activities and began developing activities focused on improving information about the transition, including government-led initiatives, in targeted areas and on the theme of reconciliation.

Between March 10 and 13, MTI supported the Regional Youth Council to organize a cultural competition between Timbuktu's eight neighborhoods. Despite concerns about security, which led to the police moving the competition for two nights from the historic public Sankoré plaza into the confined and more easily-controlled Ahmed Baba Institute's amphitheater, the activity generated a demonstrable shift in the perceptions among the population of Timbuktu town, that peace and security had returned. During four consecutive nights thousands of people descended upon the competition venue to support their neighborhoods and participate in the largest public event held since the end of the occupation.

MTI replicated the pilot approach taken in Douentza Cercle by carrying out local reconciliation forums in Niafunke Cercle: one of the geographical areas where the program is targeting resources through layering a series of complementary activities aimed at reducing tension, promoting reconciliation, and supporting the return to normalcy.

MTI piloted its M&E hotline, which is comprised of a GSM server and web-based platform for call data collection and entry. It is manned by hotline agents who respond to callers in local languages and input data in response to short survey questionnaires designed by the MTI team, with support from Yeleman, a Malian firm specialized in developing new technology applications for development. The hotline proved a powerful tool in gathering data about perceptions among participants and citizens about the event. Caller responses reaffirmed the profound positive impact hosting a successful major public event, without any security incidents, had on the population's perception about the transition.

MTI worked with a local artists' association, Kassobane, and acclaimed American artist Janet Goldner to carry out a two-week workshop for 26 Malian artists focused on the themes of peace and reconciliation. Two exhibitions, one in Mopti and the other in Bamako, brought together Malian artists, patrons of the arts, and citizens to view the art works developed during the workshop. The U.S. Ambassador, representatives of the Malian government including the Ministry of Culture, prominent Malian citizens, and representatives of the international donor community turned out in great numbers.

ACTIVITY APPRAISAL & UPCOMING AND ONGOING ACTIVITIES

MTI cleared 19 activities valued at \$1,905,544 during the January to March 2014 period. These are broken down by objective in the table at right. A total of \$3,690,819 Transition Activities Pool (TAP) funds have been committed through March 2014.

OBJECTIVE	NUMBER	AMOUNT USD
To increase citizen confidence in and information about the democratic process and governance	5	\$167,656
To promote reconciliation and social cohesion aimed at addressing drivers of conflict	14	\$1,737,888
Total	19	\$1,905,544

Of the activities cleared during the quarter, five contributed to the return to democracy, and 14 contributed to the reconciliation objective. A detailed list of the activities cleared during the quarter is included in Annex A.

FUNDING SOURCE	NUMBER	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	DISBURSEMENTS
CCF	24	\$1,182,532	\$995,322
DA	36	\$1,380,867	\$315,212
TI	9	\$1,150,938	\$210,157
Total	69	\$3, 714, 337	\$1,520,691

MTI exceeded its quarterly target of \$1.5M in new activities cleared and the program is on track to commit all program activity funding currently obligated to the task order by September 2014. The total funding available for program activities is \$6,650,000. Given that a number of activities cleared this quarter involve the rehabilitation of infrastructure, disbursement is currently lagging behind activity commitment rates. Expenditure will accelerate once subcontracts are signed with local construction firms and the rehabilitation works get underway.

OBJECTIVE 1: TO INCREASE CITIZEN CONFIDENCE IN AND INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS AND GOVERNANCE

As MTI concluded its support toward elections-related activities, it embarked on the program's first external evaluation of a cluster of program activities. This evaluation is focused on the activities which supported the presidential and legislative elections. The program also developed activities focused on improving information about the transition, government activities in targeted areas, and on the theme of reconciliation.

In response to the dearth of information generated from the north about the on-going conflict in that region, MTI initiated a partnership with Studio Tamani to accelerate the content development by its partner radio stations and network of journalists. MTI is leveraging this existing studio and a program that the Fondation Hirondelle is implementing with support from various donors, including the European Union. Also, MTI supported the construction of a large public notice board for the commune of Timbuktu in an effort to improve information, and in response to peaceful protests and increasing discontent that the government, UN, and international organizations, are not adequately engaging local businesses to carry out works at the regional and cercle levels.

OBJECTIVE 2: TO PROMOTE RECONCILIATION AND SOCIAL COHESION AIMED AT ADDRESSING DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

Following the previous quarter, during which the program largely developed soft entry activities into new programmatic and geographical areas, this quarter MTI embarked on the implementation of its first infrastructure activities. Of the 14 activities cleared this quarter, nine involve infrastructure rehabilitation and/or reequipping. By combining both visible and high-profile "hard" infrastructure rehabilitation with "soft" citizen and community engagement and communication activities, the program will support the process underway to reduce inter-ethnic and inter-regional tension exacerbated during the political and security crises, and contribute toward rebuilding Mali's rich and diverse social fabric.

The rehabilitation and reequipping activities will support the restoration and improvement of the functionality of two high schools, one cultural center, a public square, a peace garden, and the housing for the head of a regional tribunal. All of these facilities are in areas formerly occupied by armed groups and sustained direct damage, saw their equipment looted, and/or deteriorated due to the lack of maintenance during the crisis. By restoring these facilities the program will provide a tangible signal to the population that the transition to recovery is indeed underway.

This quarter, MTI also commenced its first cash-for-work activity in Soumpi Commune, which is located in the cercle of Niafunke and Timbuktu region. This activity is bringing the commune's diverse ethnic and socio-economic groups together around local infrastructure improvement projects in six target locations. MTI is implementing the activity using a participatory approach and under the supervision of the under-prefect. Given the need to transfer small weekly payments to the 420 people engaged to carry out the work, MTI leveraged the potential of \$40,000 in payments to 420 new Mobile Money users to forge a partnership between Orange and MINUSMA. As a result, five cellphone towers, damaged and looted during the crisis, are being restored by Orange, including one tower in Soumpi. Expansion of Mobile Money use and restoration and improvement of the cellphone network coverage is expected to accelerate economic recovery and improvement in the security situation.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

MTI worked hard over the quarter to clear a backlog of pending activities. With all but six activities now cleared, the coming quarter will be focused on developing new activity ideas, with special emphasis shifting the focus of the program away from elections and toward supporting national-level initiatives around reconciliation and Mali's reaching a definitive peace agreement with the northern armed groups. Additional target geographical areas in the Timbuktu region, Goundam and Dire, have been agreed on for new activity development. Expansion into the Gao region will also bring new activities.

SECURITY

No security incidents directly affected MTI staff or program activities during the quarter, though security continued to be of great concern, especially in Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu. Rockets have been fired multiple times by suspected insurgent groups in Gao and Timbuktu, mostly targeting UN peacekeeping and French military installations. One such rocket incident occurred days after the US Mission to Mali deployed its first regional security office-led assessment to Timbuktu. The AECOM Chief of Party and USAID/OTI Country Representative, who participated in the one-day trip, accompanied by US Diplomatic Security, visited multiple sites in Timbuktu, where MTI is planning and has implemented projects, including the Ahmed Baba Institute, Timbuktu High School, and the SOMAGEP generator.

Four Malian International Committee of the Red Cross employees were abducted as they traveled from Kidal to Gao. Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. This incident has prompted all international organizations operating in the north to reassess what may be growing risks for national staff movements around the three northern regions, where security has not been fully restored despite the deployment of French, Malian, and UN security forces.

STAFF MOVEMENT

Staff movements during the quarter supported program implementation and expanding operations. MTI's CCN staff made frequent trips to Niafunke, an area MTI is targeting a series of activities focused on reconciliation. The AECOM/COP and AECOM/RPM conducted regular movements to Timbuktu to support program development in the Timbuktu Region. The two remaining CCN professional staff based in Mopti agreed to transfer to Timbuktu in recognition of the need to expand the operational and procurement capacity of the field office. The COP and Procurement & Logistics Specialist traveled to Segou to participate in the annual international festival where MTI showed three films the program developed on its activities focused on the transition and reconciliation. Both the Senior Operations Manager (SOM) and COP traveled to Gao to move forward the establishment and expansion of MTI's program and operations there.

The following missions occurred during the quarter:

- From January 4-22, 2014, Senior Manager Kim Clark traveled to Bamako to provide surge support to the team during the COP's absence.
- The AECOM/COP returned to the office on January 20, 2014.
- USAID/OTI DCR traveled to the Mopti office on January 27 – 29th with the COP to meet with the Timbuktu activity management team for a rolling assessment to discuss activity cluster rational and activity development in Timbuktu region more generally. Training on the use of the activity database was also given to the Timbuktu staff.
- USAID CR and AECOM COP traveled to Timbuktu on February 13 with the first official US delegation to visit the area since the occupation by extremist groups. While in Timbuktu, CR and COP paid a visit to AECOM's local staff at the office, as well as the Ahmed Baba Institute, the SOMAGEP generator and the Timbuktu high school
- From 17-19 March, AECOM/RPM and USAID/OTI CR attended the Values and Institutions of Free Society in Mainly Muslim Countries conference in Istanbul.

OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

The Projects Officer-National Initiatives, Karim Sissoko, left the program to resume research funded by the University of Colorado at Boulder. In February, MTI hired Yaya Bouare to fill the Information & Reporting Specialist position which became vacant in December. MTI also engaged Moussa Doumbia in March as a consultant to serve as a Media & Communications Advisor and support the program as it moved to develop information-focused activities and more effectively use media, including social media, radio, and television, to disseminate information to meet program objectives. The recruitment of the cash-for-work (CFW) manager concluded in February with the engagement of Yacouba Maiga, who

is based in Niafunke and leading MTI's implementation of the program's first CFW activity. Mohamed Maiga continued his support to MTI, leading community reconciliation activities in Niafunke. MTI engaged additional support staff including a Finance Assistant—Mobile Money and an Administrative Assistant. With the engagement of consultants and filling of vacancies, MTI now has a total of four expatriate staff, 38 CCN professional employees and support staff, and four consultants. Recruitment is underway to engage professional and support staff for MTI's program and operations in Gao. Additional vacancies are being filled in Timbuktu and Bamako. The start-up of Gao operations began at the end of March upon receipt of the USAID Contracting Officer's activation of ramp up. The long-awaited MTI vehicles are expected to arrive in Bamako at the end of April 2014.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND PROPOSED REMEDIAL ACTIONS

AECOM's introduction in December of its online operations platform OneSource, which allows integration and visibility of inventory, human resources, travel, and procurement actions carried out across all offices, experienced significant challenges. Users required additional training on the effective set up and utilization of OneSource as a management tool. The tailoring of the system to the MTI staffing took more time than planned, necessitated the postponement of user training until April, May, and June. Once fully operational, OneSource will provide MTI with a tremendous management tool, especially given much of our programming and operations are remotely managed.

AECOM experienced multiple challenges in moving forward its construction-related activities. A comprehensive chronology is included in annex III. The architectural and engineering firm that AECOM engaged to assess infrastructure designated for rehabilitation, help AECOM navigate Malian regulations and standards, develop request for proposal documents in compliance with Malian law, and gather information for and respond to questions regarding approval of the Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safe Use Action Plan (PERSUAP), has provided invaluable support. What has become clear is that the existing field team, which is managing a dynamic program and operations expanding across an increasing geographical area, lacks the engineering knowledge and time to respond adequately to the unique administrative and technical demands that construction projects entail while fulfilling their regular workload. MTI proposes directly engaging both expatriate and local STTA engineering support to move forward and monitor the current approved construction-related projects to ensure designs are appropriate and safe for users, costing reasonable, and RFPs, subcontracts, and quality monitoring make sense and are FAR compliant, in addition to engaging A&E supervisory support for specific projects. If additional construction projects are considered, full time local and expatriate engineering support are recommended. These costs should be covered through TAP.

While monthly activity commitment rates have met targets, monthly disbursements on activities have lagged behind expenditure on operations. With the current high proportion of program resources committed toward largely labor-intensive, low-cost activities and high-value, difficult-to-implement infrastructure activities, acceleration in expenditure on activities is not expected until the end of the last quarter of FY14. As MTI develops programming over the next quarter, the impact of the mix of activities on expenditure rates will be kept in mind and MTI will work to balance labor intensive, low-cost activities, with both easy-to-implement quick high-value activities, and difficult-to-implement high-value infrastructure activities.

ANNEX A: ACTIVITIES CLEARED BY COUNTRY OBJECTIVE

To increase citizen confidence in and information about the democratic process and governance						
ACTIVITY NUMBER	ACTIVITY TITLE	AWARDEE	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
MTI080	Reinforcing Independent Media Capacity in Mali	Studio Tamani	\$42,663	Cleared	2/11/2014	5/16/2014
MTI085	Creation of a Public Notice Board in Timbuktu	Timbuktu Urban Commune	\$4,681	Cleared	3/7/2014	4/30/2014
MTI089	Evaluating the Impact of Elections Activities	DDGS - Cluster Evaluation	\$21,000	Cleared	2/19/2014	4/30/2014
MTI094	Increasing Awareness of National Forums on Reconciliation	Ministry of Reconciliation	\$50,046	Cleared	3/10/2014	4/25/2014
MTI096	Supporting Regional Reconciliation Forums – Timbuktu	Ministry of Reconciliation	\$49,266	Cleared	3/28/2014	5/31/2014
Total			\$167,656			

To promote reconciliation and social cohesion aimed at addressing drivers of conflict						
ACTIVITY NUMBER	ACTIVITY TITLE	AWARDEE	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
MTI027	Douentza High School (lycee) Reconstruction	Conseil de Cercle de Douentza	\$915,121	Cleared	1/9/2014	3/31/2015
MTI042	Rehabilitation of Independence Square in Douentza	Douentza Town Council	\$39,897	Cleared	2/11/2014	1/10/2015
MTI057	Training and Mobilization of Niafunke Youth as Conflict Mediators	The Office of the Niafunke Prefect	\$29,361	Cleared	2/19/2014	4/30/2014
MTI060	Rehab of Timbuktu High School Computer Lab, Library, Recreation Area & Latrines	Timbuktu Cercle Council	\$149,899	Cleared	2/11/2014	4/9/2015

To promote reconciliation and social cohesion aimed at addressing drivers of conflict

ACTIVITY NUMBER	ACTIVITY TITLE	AWARDEE	EST ACTIVITY AMOUNT USD	STATUS	START DATE	END DATE
MTI069	Rehabilitation of the House for the President of the Timbuktu Tribunal	Judiciary	\$46,729	Cleared	2/11/2014	12/10/2014
MTI070	Rehabilitation of the Harber Maiga Cultural Center in Niafunke	Direction Régionale de la Culture de Tombouctou	\$100,760	Cleared	2/21/2014	6/30/2014
MTI081	Revitalization of the Timbuktu Peace Garden	Timbuktu Urban Commune	\$118,404	Cleared	3/31/2014	6/30/2014
MTI084	Reconciliation Movie Screening and Debate at the 2014 Segou Festival	DDGS - Festival sur le Niger	\$14,269	Closed	1/17/2014	2/15/2014
MTI086	Timbuktu High School - Re-equipping of the Computer Lab	Timbuktu Cercle Council	\$113,112	Cleared	3/27/2014	12/19/2014
MTI087	Timbuktu High School - Re-equipping of the Library	Timbuktu Cercle Council	\$54,499	Cleared	3/24/2014	9/30/2014
MTI088	Governor's Meeting on Reconciliation and Recovery in Niafunke	The Office of the Governor of Timbuktu	\$30,316	Cleared	3/6/2014	4/18/2014
MTI090	Supporting Effective Communications STTA	Moussa Doumbia	\$18,327	Cleared	2/20/2014	4/24/2014
MTI091	Timbuktu High School Reading Club and Essay Competition on Freedom	Timbuktu High School	\$7,028	Cleared	2/26/2014	4/30/2014
MTI093	DDGS: A&E Services for Timbuktu Infrastructure Rehabilitation Projects	DDGS : Architecture and Engineering Services	\$100,165	Cleared	3/24/2014	6/28/2015
		Total	\$1,737,888			

ANNEX C: CHRONOLOGY OF CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED WITH THE DOUENTZA AND RELATED CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES

- In early September 2013, following meetings with the Ministry of Education, AECOM engaged a local architectural and engineering firm, AAU, highly recommended by another USAID contractor, to carry out an initial assessment of the state of the Douentza High School buildings and provide rough cost estimates for their rehabilitation.
- After reviewing the rough costs with AAU and OTI in late September 2013, MTI decided to proceed and do all the high school buildings requiring rehabilitation as well as the Douentza Independence Plaza.
- With this decision, MTI sought to immediately engage the same A&E firm on a fixed-price subcontract to develop detailed drawings, quantities and costing estimates for these works; develop a draft request for proposals (RFP); support the technical evaluation of proposals; and supervise the construction contractor(s) engaged to do the works. In late September, given that the subcontract would exceed the COP's delegated signatory authority, the AECOM field office sought support from AECOM's home office to develop the subcontract. The format, terms and clauses of the subcontract for supervisory works took time to finalize. The subcontract between AECOM/HO and AAU was signed on 2 December 2013.
- In mid-December, AAU presented drafts of the detailed assessment, drawings, costing, and RFP.
- Using these detailed estimated costs, on 27 December, MTI submitted a request to MTI's contracting officer (USAID/CO) to approve the clearance of the activity. Approval was forthcoming on 9 January 2014.
- Upon receipt of the approval, MTI immediately informed the Ministry of Education that MTI could proceed with the activity. The ministry staff, however, requested that MTI postpone moving forward until a meeting could be held with the ministry's Secretary General.
- The Secretary General of the Ministry of Education was only able to meet with MTI on 9 February. After the meeting, the Ministry again requested MTI to hold off on moving the activity forward until the Secretary General sent a formal letter outlining the ministry staff's roles and responsibilities during the implementation of the works. Despite repeated calls, MTI did not receive the letter from the secretary general until March 3.
- While awaiting the green-light from the ministry to proceed and given the size of the procurement and anticipated subsequent subcontract award(s), which would likely require USAID/CO approval, on 21 February, MTI sent nine of the draft documents, which would comprise the bulk of the RFP for translation:
 - Document 1—Request for Proposals
 - Document 2—Instructions to Offerors
 - Document 3—Award letter and special/supplementary clauses
 - Document 4—Technical Clauses
 - Annex 1—Submission Template
 - Annex 2—General Information Sheet
 - Annex 5—Mandatory Site Visit Certificate
 - Annex 6—Bank guarantee/bond templates
 - Annex 7—FAR clauses

Given the volume and length of the documents, the award and special/supplementary clauses and technical specifications, the translation was completed on 5 March. The AECOM field office reviewed and corrected the translations, comprising approximately to 200 pages of documents, and sent the complete draft bidding package to AECOM home office for review on 15 March.

- Based on their review of the document, AECOM's contracts department raised a number of concerns about the draft documents and the inconsistencies between the model RFP presented by AAU and used often for donor-funded projects in Mali with USAID and USG requirements. The home office also raised concerns regarding potential liability.
- On 19 March, the field and home office teams, seeking additional technical expertise to review the quality of AAU's drawings, costing, and technical specifications, proposed Chris Rollins, AECOM Senior Civil Engineer and certified structural engineer, who had worked on AECOM's OTI legacy project in South Sudan to provide STTA support. OTI approved his STTA, comprised of both remote and in-country work on 20 March.
- Once Chris began reviewing the available documents, he quickly realized that with the information, as presented by AAU, it would be impossible for him to provide a professional opinion on the designs, costing, or specifications and he requested to change the schedule of his STTA to travel as soon as he could to Mali. That travel was proposed and approved.
- During Chris's visit to Douentza he identified weaknesses in AAU's drawings and plans. He recommended a significant change in the approach to the rehabilitation and upon his return to Bamako MTI convened a meeting with AAU and Chris to go over his report.
- Following the meeting, the field office had Chris's report translated in order to share it with AAU MTI's concerns related to the plans for structural and mechanical rehabilitation, costing, and the technical and administrative terms outlined in the draft RFP documents.
- AAU responded and MTI requested AAU to make a series of corrections to the plans and cost estimates. AAU is slated to deliver these updated documents, which are required for the RFP to be released, on 7 May.
- The RFP release date is now anticipated for on/about 8 May with proposals due and bid opening on 10 June following the MTI SRS. The technical evaluation of proposals is expected to be completed on/about 30 June with the consent to subcontract to be prepared and submitted to the USAID/CO by 7 July and award of the subcontract to me made immediately upon receipt of USAID/CO approval.
- Actual mobilization to the site by the construction firm and works are expected to begin by the end of July.
- On a related, issue, for over five months, despite sustained engagement, the PERSUAP remains unapproved. Termite treatment is ideally done at the very beginning of a construction project. USAID approval for the PERSUAP should ideally be secured by the end of July.

ANNEX D: SUCCESS STORY I



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Success Story – MALI

Reconciliation through Art: The recovery of Mali's culture and Identity



Photo – Artist Kadidia Nianta sculpts during the artist's residence in Mopti.

Photo by Janet Goldner

Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

March 2014 – Mali is a country with exceptionally rich cultural and artistic heritage and in the Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal regions artists had long been able to contribute to supporting themselves and their families through the production and sale of their works. During the 2012 occupation of the North, armed extremist groups harshly oppressed artistic expression. In addition, the occupation brought a near collapse in Malian and international tourism to these regions, making art no longer a viable livelihood.

In order to provide much-needed support to some of Mali's most talented artists, MTI launched a nation-wide call for applications from artists to attend a two-week residence in Mopti. The well-established artist's collective Groupe Bogolan Kasobane, with support of American artist Janet Goldner, selected 25 artists from across the country to participate and apply their talents to produce original works on the themes of peace and reconciliation. At the conclusion of the residence, Groupe Bogolan Kasobane held two exhibitions, at Mopti's Alliance Franco-malienne and at the Bamako District Museum.

Participant Kadidia Nianta said, "I am a potter and generations of my family have been artists, but when the armed groups occupied our region, we were forced to stop our business due to fear and the lack of customers. I never imagined that I would be able to restart my livelihood; but, through this activity, I hope to resume my life and contribute to the culture of peace with my art."

In addition to supporting these artists, the public exhibitions provided an opportunity to encourage community-dialogue about the reconciliation process. As artist Balla Toure explained, "The artist is an advisor in society and their art allows us to speak about the need for peace and social cohesion, upon which the existence of our profession is predicated. The time of occupation confirmed that fact."

The exhibition in Bamako, attended by US Ambassador Mary Beth Leonard and covered by national media outlets, provided an excellent opportunity to showcase not only the artists' works, but also the role of art and culture in the national reconciliation process.

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Web: www.usaid.gov keyword search: Political Transition

ANNEX E: SUCCESS STORY II



TRANSFORMING LIVES – MALI

TIMBUKTU RECLAIMS ITS CULTURE AFTER CONFLICT IN MALI



Photo – Timbuktu youth perform original songs and dance about peace and reconciliation.

Photo by Yaya Bouare

"We are sure the city is ours now!"

Said Mohamed Sidy Arby, referencing the liberation of Timbuktu from extremist occupation

Telling Our Story

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March 2014 - March 2014—The occupation of Timbuktu in 2012 was a traumatic experience for the entire community, but particularly the youth, who were targeted by armed extremist groups who imposed brutal interpretation of Sharia law. For over a year, young people became prisoners in their own city or were forced to seek refuge in other areas of Mali and neighboring countries.

Extremists banned social and cultural activities and sanctioned, often violently, anyone caught listening to music. A year after the liberation of Timbuktu in early 2013, the scars and trauma of the occupation remained.

To restore a sense of normalcy to the community, as well as encourage a resurgence of art and culture in Timbuktu, USAID, through its Office of Transition Initiatives, has been working with local authorities, traditional leaders and youth since October 2013. In collaboration with the youth council of Timbuktu, USAID organized a four-day inter-neighborhood theater competition. The competition brought critical sectors of the community and ethnic groups together to develop original plays, songs and dances with the themes of peace, reconciliation and cultural resistance against violent extremism.

Thousands of community members—men, women, girls and boys of all ages from all ethnic groups and social classes—attended each evening of the four-night event, signaling the population's growing confidence in the transition and improved security.

Said one elderly man who attended the event, "With the exception of the nights of Maouloud, the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed, I've never seen a public show comparable to this in Timbuktu."

"I did not think we would ever be able to be in the same place with girls in Timbuktu," said a young boy as he danced.

The activity allowed residents from across Timbuktu's eight neighborhoods to meet, interact and celebrate the return to peace and cultural diversity as they watched touching performances portraying the pain and struggle involved in achieving reconciliation.

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